

# Williamson County Office of Emergency Management's use of Social Media in Emergency Management During the September 2011 Central Texas Wildfires

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**Introduction**

In August, 2011 the Williamson County, Texas Office of Emergency Management began a public awareness campaign called Preparing Williamson County. The campaign used the social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter as a way to engage citizens in the community. Before the September 2011 Central Texas Wildfires the followers on both accounts would receive information on how to prepare for severe weather and disasters such as wildfires. Once the wildfires started on Sunday, September 4<sup>th</sup>, 2011 there was a tremendous increase in followers to both the Facebook and Twitter accounts for the campaign. Both the Office of Emergency Management and their active audience were able to be engaged through social media to exchange information about the wildfires.

**Engaging Citizens with Social Media**

During the September 2011 Central Texas Wildfires both the Preparing WilCo Facebook and Twitter accounts were used to relay breaking information about the wildfires to citizens. Followers were able to engage through social media with the Office of Emergency Management and other citizens to get answers of their questions. Examples of engagement included information about wildfire locations, evacuations, sheltering information, and how to help the victims of the wildfires.

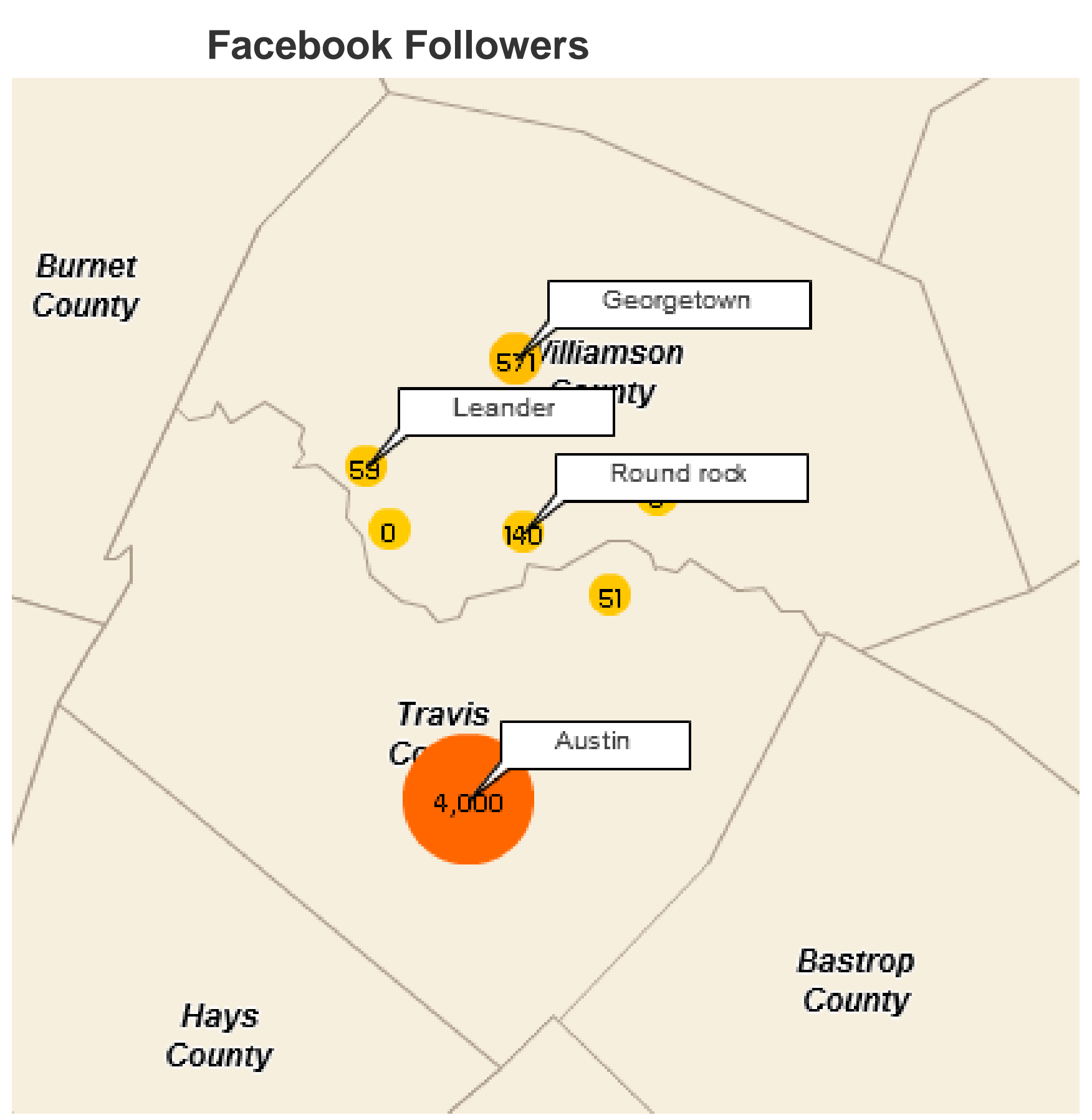
**Results**

For the week starting on Sunday, September 4<sup>th</sup>, 2011 the Preparing WilCo Facebook page had 227 followers. On Monday, Memorial Day, as news broke about the wildfires affecting the Central Texas area the number of followers increased from 227 to 4787 followers, a 2100% increase. The next day saw the number of followers increase to 7032, another 147% increase in followers. By the end of the week, there were a total of 7825 followers on the Preparing Wilco's Facebook page, an increase of 3447% in a week. The number of followers created a network of followers and their friends that totaled 1.4 million. From all the postings that were made on the Facebook page it reached 240,455 people, generated 2.65 million impressions and had 59,187 clicks onto links included in the posts.



## Preparing WilCo Social Media Statistics

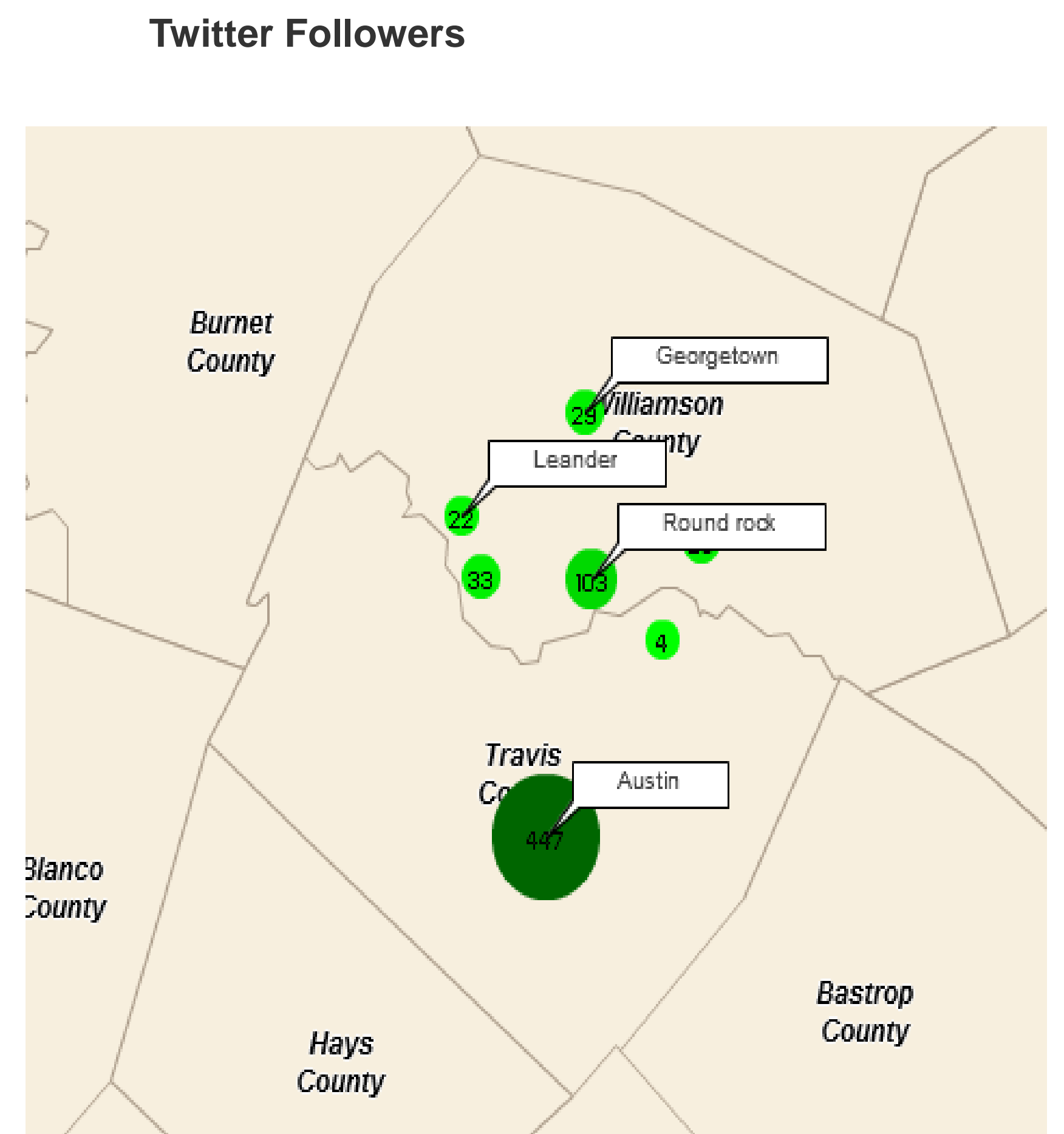
- Austin: 4000
- Dallas: 1380
- Georgetown: 571
- Houston: 272
- San Antonio: 144
- Round Rock: 140
- Leander: 59
- Pflugerville: 51



- Preparing WilCo – Facebook Page**
- Facebook Stats from Sept. 4 – Sept. 11, 2011:**
- Total number of followers: 7,825
  - Friends of friends network reach: 1.4 million
  - Total number of people reached: 240,455
  - Total number of impressions 2.65 million
  - Total number of clicks onto posts: 59,187



- Total Followers: 1221
- Austin: 447
- Dallas: 11
- Georgetown: 29
- Houston: 13
- San Antonio: 17
- Round Rock: 103
- Cedar Park: 33
- Hutt: 28
- Leander: 22
- Pflugerville: 4



## Quotes from Affected Citizens

**Williamson County Office of Emergency Management**  
There is NO fire in Liberty Hill at this time.  
Like · Comment · Share · September 5, 2011 at 11:16pm · 114 people like this. · View all 9 comments

**Williamson County Office of Emergency Management**  
Leander Fire Chief Bill Gardner says the Moonglow Fire is now 95% contained. Information on this fire also is available on the City of Leander Fire Department facebook page.  

**City of Leander Fire Department**  
The City of Leander Fire Department is a values driven organization that is in place to protect lives and property. We take our ability to promote the general welfare of the community very seriously and are proud to serve the community.  
Page: 1,427 like this  
Like · Comment · Share · September 7, 2011 at 10:10am · 76 people like this. · View all 29 comments

**Williamson County Office of Emergency Management**  
We have an official fire update, and are working to get it posted to our website and the facebook page at this time. Please remain patient. thank you.  
Like · Comment · Share · September 6, 2011 at 4:50pm · 4 people like this.  

**Matt Bradley** KEEP UP THE GREAT WORK !!  
September 6, 2011 at 6:05pm · Like · 1

**Williamson County Office of Emergency Management**  
The fire on Verbena Court is out, but the Fire Department will continue to watch for hot spots, especially as the day warms up. Thank you all for keeping each other informed!  
Like · Comment · Share · September 6, 2011 at 12:48pm · 96 people like this. · View all 17 comments  

**Aimee Evers** Yes thanks for updating us  
September 6, 2011 at 1:31pm · Like · 1

